

All Of The Good Stuff Happens On Weekends

In one of my favorite movies - 1983's "The Big Chill" - the character played by Jeff Goldblum was a weekly columnist for People magazine. Near the end of the movie, he announced to the other characters that he was going to write about everything that had happened that weekend.

When asked what he had planned to write about *before* that weekend, he thought for a moment and said, "Last weekend."

The job is somewhat easier for Writers Group members - we have to crank out only one column per month, so we usually have four weekends of material to draw from. Here are my own highlights:

>Last weekend, my family passed the torch (so to speak) on fireworks duty. Some of the following isn't technically legal, so let's speak hypothetically.

It is possible that my parents bought fireworks in a neighboring state again this spring and forgot to shoot them off before they drove home.

On a designated evening following the 4th of July we might or might not have had a family dinner at their house on the Coralville Reservoir, where we light up anything with a fuse. Usually my brother and I do the honors, but we decided this year that it's time to properly train the next generation of potential Emergency Room visitors.

My nephew – who may or may not be quite of legal age yet – was the logical choice. I eyed the beer he had in his hand and asked, "Max, how many of those have you had?" Surprised, he said, "This is my first!"

I pulled him aside and said solemnly, "The first thing you need to understand about fireworks is that you can't expect to have any fun unless you've got at least two beers in you." LuAnn happened to be walking by at the time and told me, "You sit down; I'll guess I'll have to be the responsible adult here."

Surprisingly, everything went smoothly this year. We didn't suffer the usual assortment of numb fingers, partial hearing loss, prairie fires or visits from the Sheriff that have plagued our previous years' celebrations.

>The weekend before that was spent with four other couples in a cabin at Clear Lake. The most thought-provoking conversation I had occurred on Saturday morning at about 9:30 a.m., when I was surprised to see Denise with a glass of white wine in her hand.

Denise is a special-needs schoolteacher who had always seemed to me to be somewhat straight-laced. I asked, "What's with the wine this early?" She replied matter-of-factly, "If your goal is to drink all day, you need to start in the morning." Denise probably needs to get out more.

>The weekend before that, I was sitting in with the Silver Swing Big Band for their performance at the Iowa City Jazz Festival. The band is comprised entirely of musicians between the ages of 50 and 85, so it must have been somebody's idea of a joke to schedule us on the Youth Stage.

It was my first public performance on slide trumpet (I'm a trombone player), and it was a little rocky. After my first really bad improv solo I discovered that when the chord is written C-major in a trumpet part, it's actually B-flat to a trombone player. What's up with that? I'm sure it makes sense to somebody.

>Let's jump ahead (for a change) to next weekend, when RAGBRAI begins. I always thought I might want to participate some day, until LuAnn's and my last trip to the Cayman Islands in May.

One day I was feeling unusually frisky so I hopped on a bicycle and rode a route encompassing half of Grand Cayman Island on a sunny and humid 90-degree day. The first 20 minutes or so were very pleasant, but the rest of it was brutal. After completing the ride in about 2½ hours, I told LuAnn, "Remind me of this day the next time I say I might want ride RAGBRAI."

>Finally, let's jump ahead one more week to the weekend of July 27-29 when the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival will take place in

Davenport. If you liked the Iowa City Jazz Festival, Bix is arguably bigger and better - and less than an hour away.

Since I prefer music that tends to have recognizable melodies and chord progressions, I'm fond of the traditional style of jazz played at Bix. There are four venues (three of them air-conditioned), but my favorite is the LeClaire Park band shell on the edge of the Mississippi – it's great. Go to Bixsociety.org for more info.

To paraphrase Denise, if your goal is to have some fun every weekend you need to start with *this* weekend.